

Martha Washington

Name: **Parental Home for Girls**
 Location: 3404 (N)E 68th Street
 Building: Wood
 Site: 1.23 acres

1914: Opened on April 1
 1918: Renamed *Girls' Parental School*
 1921: Closed
 1922: Leased to Ruth School
 1933: Leased to Medina Baby Home
 1945: Site sold in September

Name: **Girls' Parental School**
 Location: 6612 57th Avenue S
 Building: 2-story brick
 Architect: Floyd A. Naramore
 Site: 9.87 acres

1921: Opened
 1928: Residential annex added on site (n.a.)
 1930: Addition (n.a.)
 1931: Name changed to *Martha Washington School for Girls*
 1957: Closed as Seattle Public School; site leased to state
 1965: Closed as a residential school
 1968–69: Alternative program site
 1970–71: Alternative school site
 1972: Sold to City of Seattle
 1983: Used by the Cornerstone Montessori Academy
 1989: Buildings demolished
 Present: Martha Washington Park

When the Parental School opened on Mercer Island in 1905, it housed 30 boys and six girls (see Burbank). It didn't take long to learn the difficulties of mixing the sexes at a residential school and, soon after, the school was for boys only.

In 1911, after visiting the Parental School, a committee told the Seattle School Board of "the needs of the city for a similar institution for girls." The committee was then asked to consider a location for such a school. On March 14, 1914, the school board accepted a gift of land, plus a substantial building, in the Ravenna neighborhood from the Girls' Home and Training Society, with the provision that the land and building were used for a parental home for girls. The Parental Home for Girls opened the following month with 14 girls.

The Ravenna location was viewed as being temporary. During summer 1914, the board planned "to acquire a new location for the Boys' Parental School where facilities for agricultural instruction will be greater, and to use the present boys' quarters for the girls."

In 1919, the school board purchased land in the Brighton neighborhood as a new site for the girls' school. The land had, at various times, been owned by three of Seattle's pioneer schoolteachers. Edward A. Clark was Seattle's third schoolteacher, operating a school at Terminus. Upon arriving in Seattle in April 1852, Clark claimed a quarter section of land on the western shore of Lake Washington. He sold the land to David Graham who, after arriving in April 1857, was Seattle's fifth teacher, serving in the Latimer Building. Graham traded the property to his brother Walter (see Graham Hill) who settled there before selling to Asa Mercer (Seattle's ninth teacher, who instructed at the University Building). In 1889, Judge Everett Smith (see Brighton Beach) purchased the property. It was Smith who sold the land to the district.

A two-story, Georgian-style brick building was erected on the Brighton site. The students moved into the new building in June 1921.

The Ravenna site was then leased to the Ruth School for Girls. The district assumed responsibility for providing academic instruction at this Protestant institution after it opened in 1922. The girls at Ruth were wards of the Juvenile Court who exceeded the 16-year-old age limit of Girls' Parental School or were "misfits in the public schools." The district regularly assigned one teacher to Ruth. The teacher offered instruction in elementary and high school subjects to girls ranging in age from 13 to 21. Ruth School moved in 1933 to Lake Burien where the district continued to provide school services until 1955 when it was annexed into Highline School District.

In 1925–26, 38 girls attended the Girls' Parental School. They ranged in age from 10 to 16. "In all things, the effort is to maintain at the school a home atmosphere. Many of the girls have never known what this means, and they frequently develop remarkably under its influence. . . . In addition to regular school work, the girls learn to do all the work of a home—cooking, serving, canning, sewing, mending, darning, laundry work, housekeeping, and gardening. Industrial work occupies about three hours per day for each girl."

In 1928 a dormitory was added. A four-classroom structure with a



Martha Washington, ca. 1925 SPSA 392-1

gymnasium was added in 1930. These structures were done in the same style and materials as the main building.

The grounds included 500 feet of shoreline along Lake Washington, outdoor fireplaces built by the students, a large surfaced area for sports, and space for gardens. The residence halls accommodated up to 90 girls. One of the classrooms in the addition was specially equipped for home economics. In 1931, the school was renamed in honor of the nation's first first lady in accordance with a policy of commemorating famous citizens.

The girls attending Martha Washington School for Girls were wards of the Juvenile Court of King County. The school was classified as a protective institution with emphasis on academic and vocational education adjusted to the needs of each individual. Usually a minimum commitment of one year was required. Attendance figures for 1931 to 1965 ranged from 35 to 83, with the number of teachers ranging between one and ten. Vocational training at the school included child-care, working in the laundry, and assisting in the kitchen, where meals were prepared for about 100 people three times a day. Parents and relatives were allowed to visit every other Sunday from 2:00–4:00 p.m.

In September 1954, the board considered closing the school unless they received additional funding from the state. By that time, about one-third of the girls at the school came from outside of the district, and the state only reimbursed at a rate of \$60 each per month for room, board, supervision, and education. On July 1, 1957 the Seattle School District relinquished operation of Martha Washington to the State of Washington. The state agreed to pay \$50,000 annual rental on Burbank and Martha Washington schools combined and to reimburse the district for supplying teachers. The school continued to function as a residential school until 1965.

Project Interchange was housed at Martha Washington during 1968–69. Seattle’s oldest alternative program, it was designed to meet the educational needs of students who might otherwise drop out of school. Because of neighborhood uneasiness and requests that it leave, it moved to a commercial building (3704 S Ferdinand), less than two blocks from Columbia School.

Alternative School #1 used the building during the 1970–71 academic year. According to Margie Walker, program head, “When we began our school, we had a budget of \$1,500, a room in Martha Washington, three teachers and 20 parent volunteers.”

In 1972, the City of Seattle purchased the site and, in the following year, transferred it to the parks department. After over a decade of discussions, in which one option was use as a convention center, vandalism and neighborhood complaints about the prospect of increased traffic led the city council to vote for the demolition of the historic buildings and creation of a park on the site. Today the distinctive archway and trees planted in the 1920s are the only remnants of the beautiful school remaining in the park.